

*Mind's Eye*

A Thesis Exhibition Statement

Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts Department of

Art and Art History

University of Saskatchewan

By

Kaitlyn L. Frolek

Copy Right Kaitlyn L. Frolek, November 2014. All Rights Reserved

### Permission to Use

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work, or in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

## Disclaimer

Reference in this thesis to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the University of Saskatchewan. The views and opinions of the author expressed herein do not state or reflect those of the University of Saskatchewan, and shall not be used for advertising or product endorsement purposes. Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of Art and Art History

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A4

Canada

Or

Dean

College of Graduate Studies and Research

University of Saskatchewan

107 Administration Place

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A2

Canada

## **Acknowledgements**

First, I would like to thank my committee of advisors: Tim Nowlin, Susan Shantz, and Allyson Glenn. You have been a world of knowledge, encouragement and guidance. Thank you.

To my fellow MFA's, thank you for coffee breaks, advise, and constant friendship.

Maia and Robyn, I could not have made it without you.

To Mom, Dad, Will, and Mike: Thank you for embracing my love of art, for aiding in the continuation of my education, and the counsel over the years.



## **Dedication**

This thesis exhibition is dedicated to Jason, my husband, rock, and love of my life.

Thank you for everything, for sharing in my dreams, and for all the heavy lifting over the years. I love you more than the world.

To Rachel Kathleen MacIntyre, my best friend. You were taken too early from life. I will forever miss your friendship, laugh, and support. I love you. Keep watching out for me.

## Table of Contents

Permission To Use.....	i
Disclaimer.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Illustrations.....	1
Chapter 1 Photographs and ‘Street Photos’ .....	2
Photographs/ ‘Street Photography’ .....	4
Chapter 2 Paintings Inspirations and First Paintings.....	14
New York Paintings.....	22
Historical and Contemporary Connections .....	28
Conclusion.....	35
Installation Images.....	40
Works Cited.....	44
Bibliography.....	46

## List of Illustrations

Figure 1 – Joseph Niépce, <i>View From the Window at Le Gras</i> , Heliograph, 1826 .....	12
Figure 2 – Joseph Niépce, <i>View From the Window at Le Gras</i> , Reproduction Silver Gelatin Print, 1826 .....	13
Figure 3 – Henri Cartier Bresson, <i>Abruzzi</i> , Silver Gelatin Print, 1951 .....	14
Figure 4 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>In the Garden</i> , Gel Medium Transfer on Canvas, 52"x 34", 2014.....	14
Figure 5 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Smelling the Roses</i> , Gel Medium Transfer on Canvas, 55"x 34", 2014 ...	18
Figure 6 – Ruth Orkin, <i>American Girl in Italy</i> , Gelatin Silver Print, 1951 .....	19
Figure 7 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Sheila</i> , Gel Medium Transfer on Canvas, 2014.....	20
Figure 8 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Untitled Self-Portrait 4</i> , Silver Gelatin Print, 2012.....	21
Figure 9 – Cindy Sherman, <i>Untitled Film Still #38</i> , Silver Gelatin Print, 8"x10", 1979.....	23
Figure 10 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Untitled Self Portrait 6</i> , Silver Gelatin Print, 11"x14", 2012.....	23
Figure 11 – Jenny Saville, <i>Propped</i> , Oil on Canvas, 83.5"x72", 1992.....	25
Figure 12 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Self Portrait I</i> , Acrylic on Plywood, 48"x 48", 2013 .....	26
Figure 13 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Self Portrait II</i> , Acrylic on Plywood, 48"x 48", 2013 .....	27
Figure 14 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Self Portrait III</i> , Acrylic on Plywood, 96"x 48", 2014 .....	27
Figure 15 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Park it There</i> , Gel Medium Transfer on Canvas, 95"x 62", 2013 .....	29
Figure 16 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Gang in New York I</i> , Oil on Canvas, 73"x 66", 2013 .....	32
Figure 17 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Gang in New York II</i> , Oil on Canvas, 73"x 66", 2013 .....	32
Figure 18 – Jerome Witkin, <i>Amy Heller</i> , Oil on Canvas, 27"x 24", 2006.....	35
Figure 19 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Maia &amp; Jelena</i> , Gel Medium Transfer on Canvas, 10"x7", 2014.....	35
Figure 20 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>Sean's Carousel</i> , Oil on Canvas, 126"x 90", 2014.....	36
Figure 21 – Jerome Witkin, <i>Her Dream</i> , Oil on Linen, 77"x69", 1986-87.....	38
Figure 22 – Kaitlyn Frolek, <i>A Somber Afternoon in Sunny Brooklyn</i> , Oil on Canvas, 78"x 78", 2014..	40
Figure 23 – Edward Hopper, <i>Early Sunday Morning</i> , Oil on Canvas, 60"x 35", 1930.....	41
Figure 24 – Kaitlyn Frolek, Installation Photograph <i>Mind's Eye</i> .....	46
Figure 25 – Kaitlyn Frolek, Installation Photographs <i>Maia, In the Street, In the Park</i> .....	47
Figure 26 – Kaitlyn Frolek, Installation Photographs <i>A Somber Afternoon in Sunny Brooklyn, Smelling the Roses</i> .....	48
Figure 27 – Kaitlyn Frolek, Installation Photographs <i>Sean's Carousel</i> .....	49

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Journal Entry: June 29 2013

#### ***"Arrival Anxiety"***

*I need a cigarette...it's all I can think about. My body is tense, and my mind is a clutter.*

*I have been in airports since 4 am Saskatoon and it is now 5 pm in New York. Maia and Cassie sense my irritation and suggest I step outside before we collect our luggage.*

*Hastily, I pull out a smoke and lighter. My legs almost run in anticipation to the nearest exit.*

*The automatic doors open. I am overwhelmed by moist, sticky hot air. It's suffocating.*

*Beads of sweat appear rapidly above my lip and around my neck. The air smells of wet exhaust and hot blacktop. I light my smoke, and inhale my cigarette and surroundings.*

*The smoke makes me lightheaded and tingly all over, like little pin pricks that flow down my arms and legs, and pool into my fingers and toes.*

*There are hotels across from the busy departure terminal, so high that I can't see behind them. Airplanes come in and out of LaGuardia, aiding in the assault on my senses. Screeching brakes and honking from pissed off taxi drivers, uncountable numbers of people scurry in and around me. All adds to the uneasiness building inside me. My chest is tight, and the pressure begins to build. The unfamiliarity – sounds, smells, and heat is too much – all of it. Panic, pure unyielding panic. I take another*

*long, agonizing drag of my cigarette, reveling in the lightheaded distraction, exhale and drop the butt.*

In June 2013, I participated in a course entitled “Representation, Embodiment, and the City”, which consisted of a two-part course between two cities, Saskatoon and New York. I travelled to the city with thirteen students and attended classes at the Polytechnique through N.Y.U in Brooklyn, N.Y., where our dorms were located. Since New York is one of the largest centers in North America, it is a boiling pot of people, activities, culture, and history. Before I set foot off the airplane, my expectations induced inner turmoil. I think it is common for most people to experience extreme levels of excitement, joy, nervousness, anxiety and stress when entering a new town, city, or country. New companions also create unknown stress, reactions, and emotions. Despite the best itinerary or plans, these personal interactions can alter how a journey is experienced.

Each section of this text is introduced with a journal entry where I recorded thoughts, memories, and feelings from my time in New York. By offering these personal entries, it is my intent to invite the reader to visualize the daily details of my experience, since they reflect the emotions, which fueled the production of the work. They also narrate and offer context. Like an artist presenting an exhibition, the “teller” to an audience or reader, stories present a stage, and thus re-enforce what is communicated in the work.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text, I introduce examples of photography and painting, which both inform and relate to work made during the two year MFA program. My thesis exhibition *Mind’sEye*, however is a culmination of

paintings, photographs, and image transfers which were made in response to the journey in New York.

### **Photographs/ 'Street Photography'**

When preparing for the trip to New York, I had to make a decision about what medium to work in while I was there. Instead of painting, which would have involved shipping my supplies and finding a suitable studio space, I chose photography because of its convenience and accessibility. I was proficient in this medium, so I was comfortable with this choice. It also presented me with an opportunity to document my explorations, collect visual material, which I would take back to Saskatoon.

Through my lens, I intended to capture how a metropolitan city can affect or influence one's body image. More specifically, was it possible for a person to change their sense of self, or 'inner perspective' in a new context, and in such a short time? Since inner and outer reflection seemed to be a fitting theme, I decided to photograph reflections of my classmates in storefronts, restaurants, or other reflective surfaces. In particular, I was interested in locations, which would relate to female consumerism, body image, and beauty. I quickly became aware that this would be a challenging task in four weeks. On some occasions, our group would travel entirely by foot or transit to two or three boroughs. This made it difficult to set up shots and pay attention to the scheduled lessons. Furthermore, I became aware I was unable to set up the image and the subject/portrait to address my

intended content. Through this kind of documentary photography, I learned that the improvised and found image captured the subject in a more natural, less predictable emotional state. Thus, my intent shifted to a new type of body of work, which would address anxiety and possibly deliver the audience to view the challenges of the journey.

As a trained photographer, I am very much aware of the technical history of the photo medium. I am trained in traditional methods to the more recent developments in digital photography, as well as photo reconstruction through programs such as Illustrator and Photoshop. Throughout the development of the works for *Mind'sEye*, I began to make a connection with arts history and the artists involved in these processes.

Since the work for *Mind'sEye* originally came from photographs, it is important to look at some of the artists my work relates to within the realm of photography, and in particular to 'street photography'. Since my shots and images were taken of people unaware, this theme was a relevant starting point. The first recorded photograph was that of a street shot from a window taken in 1826 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, Figure 1 the original plate.<sup>2</sup> And Figure 2, a reproduction of the original image.<sup>3</sup> I chose to use Ilford 3200, a grainy film which blurred the quality of the images, and despite their content, the quality of the pixilation demanded a conversation with images from a much older stage of traditional photo development. Furthermore, the imperfection and incomplete images captured in the canvas transfers re-iterate this relationship with historical processes.

In some instances, in particular the large photo image-transfers, I chose specifically not to use coloured film, the black and white film establishes not only fuzzy and disconnected feelings, but also *holes* in our memory. Although we like to think of our memory as crisp and clean, but some deteriorate, pieces go missing or are misplaced.

When visualizing the exhibition for *Mind'sEye*, I wanted the viewer to experience this deterioration in a visceral way. So, I decided to transform the photographs into image transfers. The process is imperfect and generally results in tears and a natural wear of the image. However, the fragmented image enforced the notion that memories are not always complete. The transfer process also allowed me to put my own hand in the work, to create mark-makings, and introduce brush strokes and movement within a still image. Moreover, this type of mounting was also an ideal way to visually link the photographic image transfers to large-scale paintings in the exhibition.

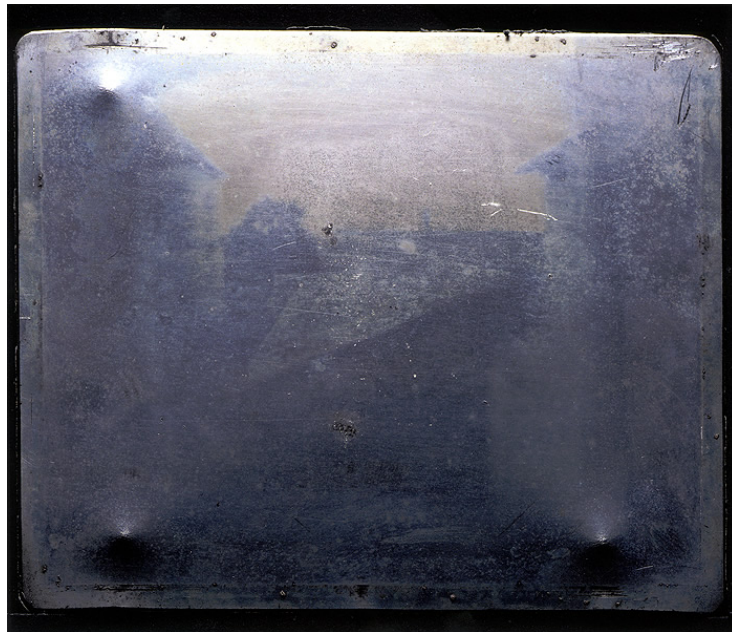


Figure 1: Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, Original Plate of View From Window at Le Gras, 1826





Figure 2: Niépce, *Image from Window at La Gras, France, 1826*

‘Street photography’ has many definitions because it has changed over the course of arts history. The most current definition, according to the dictionary, is described as “the human condition within public spaces and does not necessitate the presence of a street or even an urban environment.”<sup>4</sup> According to Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, authors of *Bystander: A History of Street Photography* their definition is “the spontaneous and arty motivated photography at public places which is influenced by issues which can be assigned since the beginning of photography... to concentrate the emotional impression of very short-lived moments by the help of aesthetics, symbolism, contrast and composition... the ‘surreal’ aspect to catch harmonious, mad, absurd, ironic, contradicting, cynical etc. relations and moments in the normal everyday and therefore ‘real’ world of human life”.<sup>5</sup> Both definitions are relevant, however I feel Westerbeck and Meyerowitz version brings to life the depth of street photography’s essence, and it also comes from the perspective of

photographers. I relate to both definitions in my work, as some of the images in the thesis exhibition are not in the street, and I see these images as candid moments that explore the variety of everyday situations that my classmates and I encountered while in New York.

In the early days of photography people didn't pay much attention to the camera, so photographs of people performing everyday tasks were much easier to achieve. On the contrary, if someone sees a camera today they look directly at it, which is evident of the modern day "selfie" phenomena. Since small digital cameras and cell phones has become such a part of our culture, people are now more sensitive towards their presence.



*Figure3. Henri Cartier Bresson, Italy, 1951*



*Figure 4. Kaitlyn Frolek, In the Garden, 2014*

Henri Cartier Bresson is most known for his candid moments, and his work demonstrates early photography well. For example, in the scene taken from an

aerial perspective shown in Figure 3, no one is looking directly at the camera and seem as if they don't realize they are having their picture taken.<sup>6</sup> It was common for photographers such as Bresson to hide themselves and their camera to obtain more candid images. This enabled photographers to wait for a particular moment to release the shutter. It was also artists like Henri Cartier Bresson and Eugène Atget to act as flâneurs, which is all in reality what photographers are.<sup>7</sup> They are watchers, they see things others do not, and they view the world in a different way, as many artists of different mediums do. Keeping their eyes fixed on a small rectangle or square, waiting for the perfect combination of elements to come together, they push a button and freeze that moment forever.<sup>8</sup> Thus the camera has become a very powerful tool for artists: to push their work and practices further, by having still images to work from without drawing them first, also making painting and other medium processes progress more quickly.

The beauty of the photograph *In the Garden* (Figure 4) is that no one was looking at the camera, despite the fact that most people are now aware of the presence of a camera. Just as in Figure 3 none of the subjects are looking at the photographer, they are moving along with their day as if nothing is different or being recorded. The women in Figure 4 share this in common with Bresson's photograph. It is a candid image. It is as if the camera is invisible to them. They are distracted by whatever else was going on in that moment: their thoughts, the guest speakers, their exhaustion and lack of energy shown through their body language, and the other people and activities in the garden.

These images were taken when we visited a community garden in the Bronx, with very little green space, and where the dominating demographic was African American and Hispanic/Latino American. Although we are calm and relaxed in this image, it was taken shortly after receiving “cat calls” or taunts from the locals in the neighbourhood. The majority of our group was white, so we stood out. This experience, however, helped us recognize what it was like to identify as ‘different’. In connection with the painted works later shown in the paper, the image transfers can also elude to isolation because most of the images are close up shots of singular subjects. Themes of difference, alienation, and isolation were not part of my original intent. However, after putting the exhibition together, I realized that the works could cause the viewer to feel these emotions, and connect to the works in these ways. The alienation we experienced that day offered us an opportunity to recognize how exceptionally unique it was; different cultures could co-exist within the city. Throughout history, people who lived there accepted their culturally unique neighbours – and they identified with this. This is what made New York City such an exceptional place.

*Journal Entry: July 10 2013*

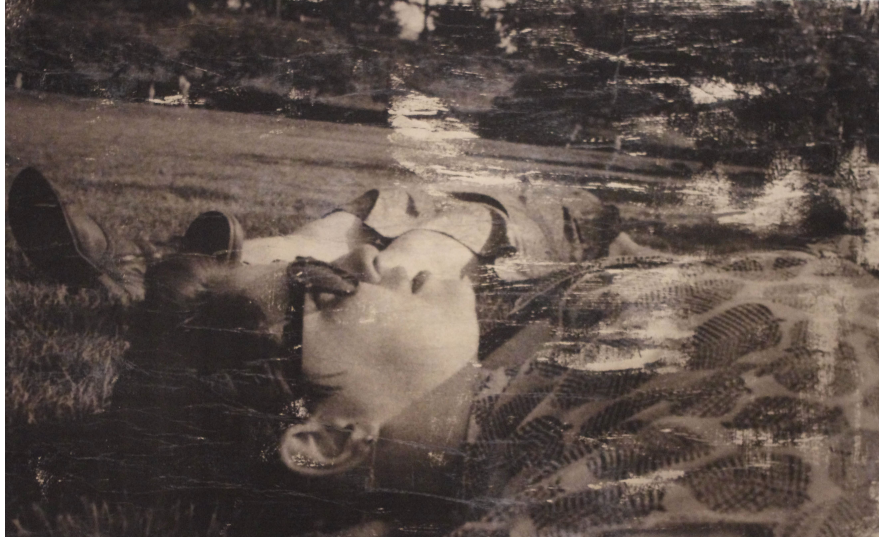
**“Smelling the Roses”**

*Someone says my name and places a hand on my arm. I feel the hard desk underneath my head, and the coolness of the air-conditioning down my back. I slowly wake. My body feels so tired. I feel like I am on autopilot, and my feet hurt so bad that all I want is to take off my shoes. Pain sears through my toes and into the balls of my feet,*

*stretching to my swollen knees and aching hips. This trip is really testing all of my physical limitations. Do I really know how far my body can go? What more can it take? Thank God, we're heading to the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens!*

*As we enter the gorgeous greenery of the garden, the intoxicating smell of roses floats around me. The scent is inviting, soothing after a long day. In a city with more gray concrete than I have ever seen, the lushness of the green grass and plants is quite literally a breath of fresh air. I close my eyes and inhale deeply. I've missed this. To feel connected with nature is invigorating. The wonder of the garden is overwhelming and I have an uncontrollable urge to take my shoes off and run like a carefree child. So I do. It's exhilarating to feel something other than cement under my feet. But all too soon my reverie is disrupted. Abruptly, two park officials stop me, "You need to put your shoes on! It's illegal to be barefoot in New York!"*

The original photograph *Smelling the Roses* (Figure 5) was taken after a very long day in Brooklyn. Not only was I exhausted but so was everyone else on the trip. This photograph is a reminder of being overwhelmed and exhausted. Evidently so were the subjects of the image, Maia and Cassie. We had dutifully spent time roaming through the rose garden, and then decided to find a nice spot to relax before heading to our dormitories. The girls quickly sprawled out on the grass, while I loaded my camera and began photographing.



*Figure 5. Smelling the Roses, Gel Medium Transfer on Canvas, 2014*

For the group, it was a revelation that a location such as a park, where one uses the sense of touch to be connected with nature, it was not permitted to be barefoot. This was an example of the many differences between a small city like Saskatoon and New York. When shooting the image I made a conscious decision to include the figure in the background with shoes on to address this content. The bodies – exhausted of energy from the numerous excursions of the day – face up towards the sun, enjoying this temporary relaxation and the stillness of the ground beneath them.

Despite my exhaustion, I found new ways of photographing from a stationary position. It was a way to push my boundaries as a photographer. Furthermore, it became a new way of seeing through the viewfinder, and a new way for ‘my body’ to take images; instead of purely shifting the camera in a horizontal or vertical fashion, now my torso, hip or chest could direct the angles.

As I mentioned earlier, my original intention was to produce posed (where I would set up a scene) photographs of my classmates in reflective surfaces. When

researching this idea, I found myself connecting to artist Ruth Orkin, who is notable for her photograph *American Girl in Italy* (Figure 6), in which she set up a shot of an experience she had encountered many times whilst in Italy, similar to our experience of “cat calls” in the Bronx. Orkin explained this image as a “phenomenon that transcends through time and culture – men feeling empowered by the ‘pack’.”<sup>9</sup>



Figure 6. Ruth Orkin, *American Girl in Italy*, Gelatin Silver Print, 1951.

I associated my photograph *Sheila* (Figure 7) with this similar instance of setting up a scene. I staged the image in front of Manolo Blahnik, a high-end shoe store on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I wanted to capture a moment with my friend Sheila, who had shared a personal desire to acknowledge a traumatic event through a ritual, (or a rite of passage) by purchasing a gift to her-self, which was a pair of shoes. This moment was about moving forward, letting go of the pain of her loss, and placing it in the past. The shoe in the image was strangely symbolic for her next step forward. In the image, her reflection mirrors her pensively waiting but gesturing behind her,



a bodily movement which could signify the duality between past and future. I felt the dialogue between the two reflections were significant. Although somewhat staged, this photograph was also able to communicate experience, memory, and a sense of place within that time.



*Figure 7. Kaitlyn Frolek, Sheila, Gel Medium Transfer on Canvas, 2014*

## **Chapter 2**

### **Inspirations and First Paintings**

Before going to New York I was working on a self-portrait series. The first part of this series was a selection of pinhole photographs of my body blending with the Saskatchewan prairie landscape. As a woman, born and raised in British



Columbia, surrounded by large bodies of water and endless mountain ranges, the transition to Saskatoon was challenging. The openness of the environment was overwhelming in Saskatoon. As a way to explore and tame the anxiety I was experiencing, I began photographing my body fully submerged into the scenery. I wandered down old dirt roads looking for sites to interact with such as ditches, frozen ponds, snow covered canola fields, and densely treed areas.



*Figure 8. Kaitlyn Frolek, Untitled Self-Portrait, 2012-13.*

This process forced a physical connection between my mind and body in relation to the prairie landscape. The photographic procedure was demanding. Lucy Lippard describes my approach well: “Each time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really what all “local places” consist of. By entering that hybrid we change it; and in each situation we may play a different role.”<sup>10</sup>

This intense photographic process allowed me to develop a new appreciation for my body and the Saskatchewan landscape. It was after the pinhole series that I came to the conclusion that my body itself could act as landscape. These

photographs inspired me to explore these ideas through another medium. Thus, I began a series of self-portraits using acrylic paintings on plywood.

While creating these new paintings, I was researching and writing a paper on Jenny Saville and Cindy Sherman, two women I have looked to for inspiration throughout my art education. My paper “Jenny Saville and Cindy Sherman: Shattering the Myths Infiltrated By Generations of Mass Imagery”, discussed how the two artists were able to use their artwork to play against societal norms of idealized beauty, notions of the “perfect” woman, and the myths associated within this realm. I chose to research Cindy Sherman and Jenny Saville, not only because I was inspired by them, but also because I felt they made a significant contribution to the course of visual arts history by confronting the pressure of advertising and the affect it has on women. Both artists create works, which guide viewers to confront these stereotypes surrounding women and their bodies, as well as insecurities, fears, and misunderstandings.



Figure 9. Cindy Sherman, *Film Still #38*, 1979    Figure 10. Kaitlyn Frolek, *Untitled S.P.*, 2012-13

I see many similarities and differences between Cindy Sherman's photographic work and my own. Sherman hides her true self, through disguise, and plays a part to camouflage her own persona (Figure 9).<sup>11</sup> Sherman uses made up personalities and situations in her work, particularly in *Untitled Film Stills* where she uses a combination of costume, make-up, and staging to mask. The mask is a way to re-invent her identity. When I developed the photographic *Untitled Self Portrait* series, I reflected on Sherman's tactics and thought about ways in which I could capture emotion and re-invent or disguise my identity (Figure 10). In the painted *Self-Portrait Series* I decided to use exaggerated and non-local colour. These non-local colours are much like cosmetics or make-up, to mask or make the mundane spectacular. The real Cindy Sherman can be found in her images if one

looks at it long enough, which I have also tried to accomplish in my painted self-portraits.

When researching the works of Jenny Saville, the image *Propped* (Figure 11), where a nude female figure appears lumped together supported by a stool, the body is foreshortened because the mound of thighs dominates the image and distorts the onlooker's perception of the figure.<sup>12</sup> The woman's hands are crossed over her thighs and her fingers dig and tear into the flesh of her legs. From here your eye can move up or down the enormous painting constituting only flesh, fat and skin. When looking directly at the figures face one can recognize the disproportionately small head staring directly at you; confronting, judging, and disrupting your gaze. Her shoulders are hunched forward, accentuating her collarbone and the crevasses it forms. The breasts of the figure are squeezed together as if pain sears throughout her frozen state of anxiety. Her ankles are crossed and one notices small, white ballet-like shoes, which are very delicate in nature, in contrast to the rest of the painting.



Figure 11. Jenny Saville, *Propped*, Oil on Canvas, 1992

Saville and Sherman both use body language successfully in their works. This body language was something I wanted to emulate in my own work and emerges in the collapsed figures featured in Figure 4. When I moved from the medium of photography to painting, I wanted to maintain this intent to capture body language, so I embarked on *Self-Portrait I*, which was to exude anxiety and stress. The variations of red are symbolic of pain and tension in the body. The figure is in a hunched posture, fingers digging into the ground; this language of the body evokes pain, stress, and stiffness. In *Self-Portrait II*, sadness, self-reflection, and exhaustion are captured through the palette of blues. This piece was to express an internal

struggle within the body. The two paintings are a diptych, connected by a vein-like image, emblematic not only of our blood which is life giving, but also of our minds and mental states, linking the two figures. The combination of the female figure, myself, on the decorative plywood is also a link to landscape. I see the patterning in the wood as similar to the patterning of the vein-like image, acting as a bridge between the two. The contrasts of red/blue and mind/body build the connection between the self-portrait and the medium. Blue and red are commonly associated with cool and warm colours, reflecting temperature within a painting and are considered opposites. Similarly, mind and body are juxtaposed as opposites even though they are linked and interconnected in human beings.



*Figure 12. Kaitlyn Frolek, Self Portrait I, Acrylic on Plywood, 2013*





Figure 13. Kaitlyn Frolek, *Self Portrait II*, Acrylic on Plywood, 2013

*Self-Portrait III* is a combination of warm and cool colours. The gaze, instead of being directed internally reflecting the figures emotion is directed outward, where she confronts the viewer with her eyes and her body.



Figure 14. Kaitlyn Frolek, *Self Portrait III*, Acrylic on Plywood, 2013

After developing *Self-Portrait I, II, III* and upon returning from the trip to New York, I decided to select photo images, which could be carried out into a series of figurative paintings. This commitment to painting was an opportunity for me to work with another medium and transform the photographs into large paintings.

### **New York Paintings**

*Park it There*; Figure 15 was the first image I chose to collage multiple images. The painting is made out of three separate photographs. One can notice that the space between the two rows of benches is proportionately smaller than it would be in accordance our normal perspective. I also played up the difference in textures and techniques within the painting. I hoped to illuminate the colours in the painting by altering the under-painting and using glazes on the bench. The figures were made crisp to remain the focal point. The background of the image is gestural and full of exaggerated and saturated colours. The decision to do this was very conscious, it was my desire to have a push and pull between the real, and imagined states of mind. Enforcing the idea of mixed proportions and make the viewers spend more time focusing on the textural details of the image.





*Figure 15. Kaitlyn Frolek, Park it There, Oil on Canvas, 2013-2014.*

Just as I stayed true to the traditions of photography, and image transfers, I wanted to use traditional mediums used in painting, so I chose to use oils. The lushness of the paint enabled me to bring forward my love for vibrant, contrasting colour. I also made the decision to not digitally manipulate the photographs using Photoshop.

For years since the invention of photography, photographers have been manipulating photographs. The darkroom process makes this very easy to accomplish by altering apertures, development times, pushing/pulling film, even hand tinting images. Some of the best film manipulators could take people out of a frame by stitching together multiple negatives. In today's age we now have technologies to do this for us, and again I admit I have used them in the past, and

they can be necessary for certain tasks such as documenting paintings and photographs. However, in this body of work I tried to limit the use of alteration using digital imagery. I instead made conscious choices to remove certain architecture, people, and vehicles from the paintings. This was to ensure that the focus would be on the subjects (portraits), the surrounding city, and architecture, an example of this would be Figure 15. The removal of external objects and other pedestrians, however, directs the viewer to sense the subject's alienation and isolation since the subjects are alone in a barren urban center. These works also capture the culture shock we as a group were experiencing. Even though we were in a city with millions of other people, we still had moments of loneliness. Although a person can be surrounded by hundreds of thousands of people, large buildings, and bustling traffic, without a companion, it is easy to feel left out and lonely. When making the paintings, I chose to delete the seams of each photograph. I made this choice because I did not want the viewer to address multiple images, but rather feel like they could step into that place or space. Thus the figures are isolated from the usual 'traffic' of pedestrians, dogs, and vendors in Central Park, to create an open dialogue between the viewer and the subjects of the painting.

*Journal Entry: July 15 2013,*

**"Tenement Turbulence"**

*I walk up a narrow wood staircase, jammed in the middle of a line of fifteen other people. It's very dim and smells of wood, dust, and broiling, soggy air. The stairs creak and groan under the weight of our bodies moving in unison.*

*Everything is tight and small at the top of the steps. It feels as if only two people could live in this two-bedroom apartment, which I have been told was an old tailor/sewing shop – original sweatshop perhaps—where up to twelve people could be living and working at one time. The thought makes me uncomfortable – uneasy.*

*The rooms are dressed up with nostalgia. Antiques and original appliances decorate the three rooms: dining room, bedroom/workshop, and kitchen/bedroom.*

*It's mid-day and the sun is beating down on the brick building. Sweat drips down my back, pooling in the underwire of my bra just below my breasts, and even behind my knees moisture leaks down to the heel of my sandals. I hold my bag with two heavy cameras and the weight pulls at the sinews of muscle in my left shoulder. We now move to the small kitchen/bedroom. Everything feels constrained with so many people in such a place. A familiar feeling erupts; fear, anxiety and panic spread like hot liquor from my chest through my extremities. I shake and perspire more. I look in all directions for an escape. Bodies block the stairs. Panic – more heart-palpitating panic. Behind me are other classmates. Sensing my angst they discreetly part and make room. I dart past them and burst through the fire exit, run down the stairs into the blinding light. My body sways once I step on the ground and I lean against the warm rough brick building. My back slides down the bricks, bunching my shirt midway up my posterior, as my legs crouch beneath me. Gulps of air force their way into my lungs as the anxiety creeps its way through my veins.*



Figure 16. Kaitlyn Frolek, *Gang in NY I*, 2013



Figure 17. Kaitlyn Frolek *Gang in NY II*, 2014

When developing *Gang in New York I and II* I wanted to demonstrate how a city could shift the physical experience of a large city. For example, in *Gang in New York I*, the urban landscape is infinite and open, full of imagination, endless possibility, color, and architecture. However, as explained in my journal *Tenement Turmoil*, a large center can become overwhelming and constricting. With so much constant movement on the sidewalks, streets, and storefronts, one must abandon personal space! One of the questions I wanted to address in this body of work was “How does the constant visual and auditory stimulation affect a person?”

*Gang in New York I & II* is the only diptych in the thesis exhibition. The first painting is from a photograph I took in front of the pier in Brooklyn, on the first day that we arrived. The second painting is a photograph from the day we visited the Lower East Side and took a tour of the Tenement Museum, as well as a walking tour

of China Town and the original Five Points; acting as a trigger of the tight, cramped quarters experienced whilst in the Tenement buildings. During the tours we learned about how people lived: dirty conditions, cramped living quarters, little money for food and clothing, as well as a number of other troubling factors that those who immigrated looking for a brighter future had to endure. Both reference images used for these paintings were taken on days where we learned of individuals and groups of people that were responsible for some of New York's most rich history.

First, in *Gang in New York I* (Figure 16), we learned about the designers of the Brooklyn Bridge, Washington Roebling and Emily Warren Roebling. While making *Gang in New York II* (Figure 17) I intended to represent New York City's immigrant peoples, the politicians, and residents who developed the East Side. In each painting, I did not want literal representations of the Brooklyn Bridge or the tenement buildings, but rather something more abstract. The building painted in *Gang of New York I* is of an apartment with a corner of the bridge exposed in the left, top corner. It displays the importance of both people and architecture and how one does not exist without the other. I wanted to present buildings and their histories as relics of those who lived in and created them. *Gang in New York I* (Figure 16) is painted more vibrantly than its counterpart. It was my intent to celebrate the history of the city. The figures are dense, monumental in size, and huddled together. They were painted with more muted colours. The thickest layers were used for their clothing, like protective or armored attire. This image expresses physically and conceptually how a person or people so quickly immersed within a new environment and culture might encounter struggle – while the armor, whether imagined or real, acts as

strength and protection. My intent was to represent those that lived in the Tenement buildings, in the early days of New York's growth, and who endured challenging working conditions. They had to be strong, work together to survive, protect themselves, and their families from conflicts happening within the city.

The diptych (Figures 16 and 17) eliminates all other activity from the image and focuses strictly on the architecture and subjects. The lack of activity in the first image is contrasted by the life-size figures dominating the right panel, expressing the 'otherness' or feeling of being 'different' within the city. Not all of us felt this way all of the time, but feelings of otherness did affect all of us at some point during the trip.

### **Historical and Contemporary Connections**

Recently, I have found myself looking at artists such Jerome Witkin and Edward Hopper. At first I began looking at their work for colour pallet solutions, to assist when certain areas of my paintings became difficult to resolve.

Jerome Witkin is a beautifully talented painter that combines traditional painting methods with a contemporary flare. From his portrait series to his narrative works on the 9/11 attacks on New York City, his work maintains the lushness of oil paints. The movement, brushwork, mark making, and colour pallet choices create his signature within the world and realm of painting. I found similarities between his painted portraits and the image transfer portraits I created for *Mind'sEye*.





Figure 18. Jerome Witkin, *Amy Heller*, 2006. Figure 19. Kaitlyn Frolek, *Maia&Jelena*, 2013

Figure 18, *Amy Heller*, by Witkin and Figure 19, *Maia & Jelena*, seem as if they are unaware of the presence of the artist – they are focused on something outside the frame of the work.<sup>13</sup> Witkin’s work can often be described as grotesque or overtly sexual in nature, but I feel that works to his advantage, specifically when viewed by an audience.<sup>14</sup> As human beings we feel guilt, we sympathize, or empathize with the horrors we see and encounter, like those events that happened on 9/11 or the more current situations with terrorist groups such as ISIS: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. We feel sorry, or worried, or guilty, and often enough it’s hard to look at, but we cannot help ourselves. It’s human nature. Just like when there is a car accident on the side of the highway, everyone slows down to take a look: they are voyeurs or flaneurs. But often people don’t stop. Jerome Witkin’s work is successful because it forces people to stop. To take a deep look into the work, and to see the multiple levels of imagery he uses within his paintings. His paintings make people feel the sensations emoted from his works. This is how I

want viewers to engage with my work as well. Although my subject matter is quite different from Witkin's, my paintings express the emotions I want viewers to empathize with, and to feel a part of; so they can step into the painting and sit or stand with the figures. Most importantly, communicate how the subjects felt in the context of this journey to New York.



Figure 20. Kaitlyn Frolek, *Sean's Carousel*, Oil on Canvas, 2014

*Sean's Carousel* (Figure 20) was the largest and most difficult image to paint, with numerous layers of reflection within glass surfaces. Again, I explored the theme of layered reflections. However, this time I deliberately combined architecture and the figure. The photo reference I used for this painting depicts Sean, who after a long and excruciating day stares pensively into the distant horizon of the NY skyline. The



sun was setting and the reflection of Manhattan is visible in the glass of the carousel.

I chose to use this image in order to suggest the transition from one place to another, from the comfort of the carousel to the discomfort (or unfamiliarity) of the city. I wanted the viewer to be challenged by the complexity of the space and layered glass. Like mirrors of memory, history, and experience, these images offer context for Sean's contemplative gaze. Like Lucy Lippard, I am interested in how place influences our minds, bodies, and emotions, how this shifts our sense of identity.

"Inherent in the local is the concept of place – a portion of land/town/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar. Most often place applies to our own "local" – entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke. Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a persons life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It is about connection, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there?"<sup>15</sup>

This quote by Lucy Lippard connected well with the painting of *Sean's Carousel*. It demonstrates the layers of New York City's history, the layers of its present history, and what will happen in it's future. The figure, Sean, in the painting looks off pensively, as if he is looking into this history. It is as if he is interacting with the history of the local's of New York City's past, present, and future, becoming a part of that history, as well as the concept of the local.

I would also like to contrast the technical aspect of *Sean's Carousel* with Jerome Witkin's *Her Dream* (Figure 21) because as I paint with numerous layers of reflection, Witkin uses layers of information and imagery in his paintings.<sup>16</sup>

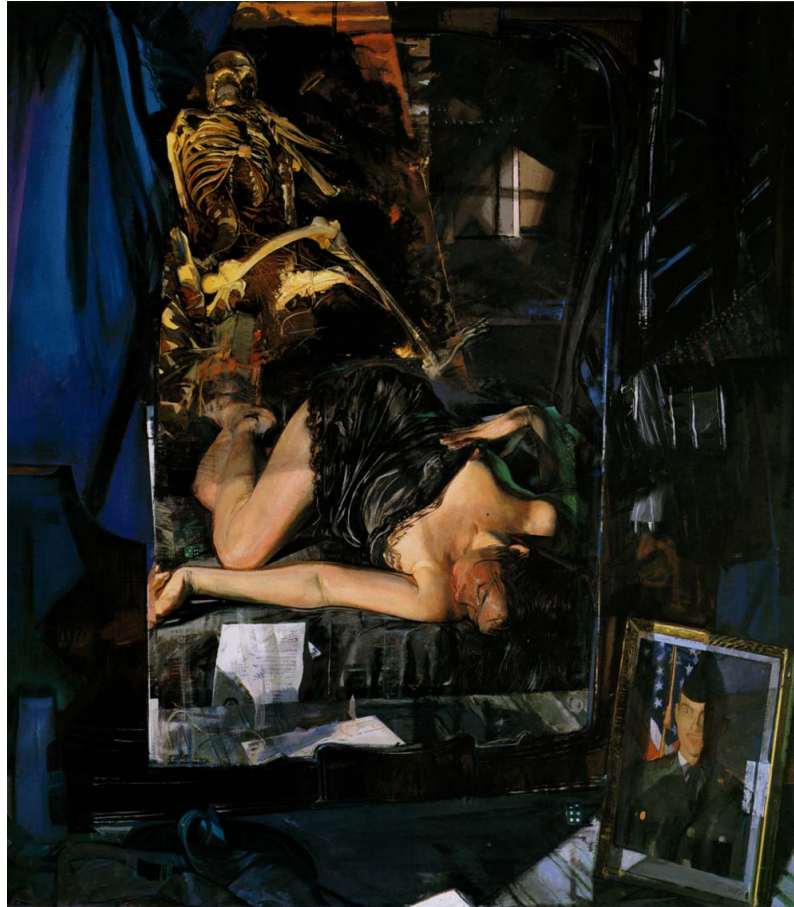


Figure 21. Jerome Witkin, *Her Dream*, 1986-87, Oil on Linen

The relationship between the subject, cues, symbols, and small details present a context and offer answers to the narrative. Although I did not use the same subject matter, *Her Dream* makes use of the mirror as a symbol. While the figure is exhausted of all emotion, and the image is very dark and melodramatic; the 'still life' evidence leads the viewer to recognize there has been trauma. The details in imagery, and colour palette are of most interest to me in relation to Witkin's

work, as well as his ability to build upon layers of information within the frame of his paintings.

*A Somber Afternoon in Sunny Brooklyn*, Figure 22 is based on a photograph that I took the first day we arrived in NYC. At five thirty in the evening, we loaded into a van and began making our way from LaGuardia airport to our dorms in Brooklyn. From there we dropped off our belongings, and walked for twenty minutes down to the Brooklyn Bridge. For most of us we were well past the feeling of exhaustion. However, we pushed on, listened to our guest speakers, and were offered some free time to explore the pier, while we waited for our first meal. I began photographing the architecture that was around us: the bridge, the carousel, the restaurants on the pier, and the old shipping grounds and buildings. I was fascinated by the beautiful, rich colors in the brick. They contrasted well with the setting sun and colors dancing in the sky. Near the end of the trip it seemed we were becoming part of the local, unfolding the histories of the city, and in turn becoming a part of it's history. These memories were becoming a point in the map of our own histories.

When developing *A Somber Day in Sunny Brooklyn*, I was thinking about this experience and chose to work from an image from the Brooklyn Bridge. The original painting did not have the figures in it. However, I wanted to express the group's emotions, which could only be communicated through facial expressions. Therefore, I chose to repeat the figures from *Gang in New York II*. I reversed the image of the figure to seem like are stepping into a portal or threshold. I used the multiple

entryways, repeated in the interior of the building to express the beginning of a long journey.



Figure 22. Kaitlyn Frolek, *A Somber Afternoon in Sunny Brooklyn*, Oil on Canvas, 2013-2014

It is interesting to compare Figure 22 to the architectural landscapes of Edward Hopper, an American painter, a New York artist. It seems we share a similar colour palette, which reflect the vibrancy, yet the occasional simplicity of the city. It is worth noting that Hopper worked and used material from the past in New York's history, and I have taken my information from its present. Hopper's imagery and scenes are simple, explaining the everyday/night experiences of those living in New York through the early 1900s. Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning* (Figure 23) and my own *A Somber Afternoon in Sunny Brooklyn* (Figure 22) share a similar subject and colour palette, with variations of reds, greens, yellows, and greys. The multiple

entryways into the building/shipping yard create an interesting didactic between my painting from 2014, and his completed in 1930. The buildings act as a symbol to multiple entries and exits within the city, while metaphorically they act as different routes you can move within a city. They express the unknown. They demonstrate the history of the city, and the quiet moments that do exist in some locations.



Figure 23. Edward Hopper, *Early Sunday Morning*, Oil on Canvas, 1930

## Conclusion

*Journal Entry: July 17 2013*

### **"A Serendipitous New York Moment"**

*Last night was to be the highlight of my trip. I was out seeing Kinky Boots, my first Broadway show! Oh my, it was everything I wanted it to be: theater, music, dancing,*

*and friends to share it with! After the show and a late night bite to eat, I received a phone call with news that a close relative's illness and health had made a turn for the worse. It was as if the wind had been sucked out of my lungs. Within seconds I went from bliss to panic.*

*In the morning: I am unable to attend class with my friends. The emotional evening has left me raw and aching. My phone buzzes. Marie is checking on me, and invites me to join the class for lunch and the following lecture. I have no idea what motivates me to move, but I do. I move slowly, feeling nothing but sadness radiating through me. I walk out of the dorms and into the sunshine, down one block, past the post office, and down the stairs of the subway station. I have the instructions on my phone of which train to take. It arrives, and I step on, take my seat, and pull out a book. I am not afraid, like I thought I would. Perhaps, I'm just numb? Sitting alone I read, letting the gentle rocking of the train relax me, and the cool air conditioning soothe me. I hear the bell for the next stop, and the automated voice tell me which one it is. I lift my finger to turn the page as the train comes to a stop. Fractionally, I lift my eyes, and seeing smiling faces and waving hands. It's my class! What are the chances!? It is this moment that changes me: knowing that I am able to maneuver my way through a huge city like New York on my own, an anxiety-ridden fear I have always had with travelling, evaporate when I run into the only people I know here.*

I chose to conclude this essay with this journal entry because I want it to be clear that New York was not just filled with panic, anxiety, and exhaustion. It was an experience that I will remember for the rest of my life, and a journey that helped me



to reclaim an independence that I lost a long time ago. I have for most of my life struggled with mental illness and a physical disability. It is not something that people can see, so often it can be overlooked or scoffed at. New York City and this course tested my boundaries, abilities and limitations, not only as an artist but also as a woman and human being. For a city so large that one can truly become invisible, it left me feeling open and exposed. However, if it weren't for these feelings I do not think I would have left feeling as rejuvenated and creative as I did. The trip and people I met opened me up to new ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling. It gave me an understanding of my own mind and memory, as well as others. People and place forged new meanings for me. They enabled me to appreciate the inner workings, and histories of place, and to understand that place does not exist without the people that forge it. All of these factors inspired *Mind'sEye* and invigorated a new way of painting, and a lost love for writing.

I left knowing that my art practice would change and evolve. Indeed, I found my work did not have to be purely theoretical, which is what I thought for a long time. Rather, it could be about emotions and limitations, history and place, people, and identity. And these notions do not need to be concrete or solidified, but they can be broadened and evocative. This trip, excursion, journey—whatever you wish to call it—was life changing. I was introduced to so many new people from Saskatoon and from New York, and I have made lifelong friends in the process.

Now that the work has been completed I recognize how other artistic processes and practices can be linked to and inform my own work. I found the importance of placing myself in the context of arts history and the practices of other

artists. Because as artists we borrow, look for inspiration, and glean from those artists that have come before us, and those still practicing at present. It was also significant to relate to these artists because they work or did work in similar fashions. It is also important to mention that in the works I selected, those artists did not place themselves in the work, but rather focused on the figures, architecture, place, and time the works were created. I chose to remove my photographic and painted self-portraits from the exhibition because the work was not only about my experience but that of those I photographed and painted. It was the personal narratives weaved in and out of my essay and exhibition that enabled me to put a piece of myself in the body of work and my essay. It gave me a means to explain how *Mind'sEye* came to existence. To have been able to capture the subjects in moments where they were unaware of the camera's presence, where they were seized in a moment of their own expression, thought, and experience. This is what fascinated me most about the type of 'street photography' I conducted whilst in New York. I was still present in the event that took place, however I was the one on the opposite end of the lens. Moreover, the gratification came from being the one to photograph those moments, and for most of the people on the trip the photo transfers and paintings became fixed memories for those that participated in the course.

As artists, we have the ability to see the world through a different lens. Personally in my case, I focus on the small moments and I see colour in everything. My emotions whilst creating the works for *Mind'sEye* literally coloured my work, as I looked back in my journal to relate back to each painting or photo-transfer, those emotions would influence my colour palettes and mark-making process. We use our



imagination to bring works of art to life and to the public/audience/viewers. This is our gift to the world and to us. I wanted my viewers and audience to experience this imaginative and creative process, which evolved from real life events, from images I took, and people I met. I wanted them to understand the journey of a group of Women and Gender Studies students in a large metropolitan city – New York. It is my hope and intention that those viewing the works and exhibition *Mind'sEye* will engage with the photo image transfers and paintings in a way that they can feel a part of the journey; that they could be a part of the work. To be able to relate to the moments in each image transfer and painting, almost in a way that they could step into the works and transcend to that time we as a class spent in New York City.

The definition of “mind’s eye” is the visual memory or the imagination: the human ability for visualization, for the experiencing of visual mental imagery, “the ability to see things with the mind.”<sup>18</sup> This definition brought forth a new way to work within my painting process. It gave me the freedom and ability to combine multiple images in one large painting, or to remove things from images in order to make it new and different from the original photo. Paintings and image transfers are a physical resource for me to express the malleable nature of memory, place, identity and time: they are forever fragmenting and changing, just as our minds and bodies do. This progression became a process of juxtaposing memory and imagination, people and experiences.

*Mind'sEye*

**Installation Images**



*Figure 24. Kaitlyn Frolek, Mind'sEye Definition, A Somber Afternoon in Sunny Brooklyn*



*Figure 25. (Left to Right) Maia, 2014. In the Street, 2014, In the Park, 2013-2014*





*Figure 26. (Left to Right) A Somber Afternoon in Sunny Brooklyn, 2013-2014. Smelling the Roses, 2014.*



*Figure 27. Sean's Carousel, 2014.*

### **Works Cited**

1. "google narrative". <https://www.google.ca/#q=Definition+of+narrative+>
2. "google the first photograph".  
<https://www.google.ca/#q=the+first+photograph>
3. "google the first photograph".  
<https://www.google.ca/#q=the+first+photograph>
4. "google definition of street photography".  
<https://www.google.ca/#q=definition+of+street+photography>
5. Joel Meyerowitz and Colin Westerbeck. *Bystander: A History of Street Photography*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994) 34.
6. Joel Meyerowitz and Colin Westerbeck. *Bystander*. 34-35.
7. Ibid., 34.
8. Ibid., 35.
9. Ibid., 36.
10. Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New York Press, 1997), 8.
11. Eva Respini, *Cindy Sherman*. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 101.
12. Simon Schama, *Jenny Saville*. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2005), 41.
13. *Drawn to Paint: The Art of Jerome Witkin*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 35.

14. *Drawn to Paint: The Art of Jerome Witkin*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 34.
15. Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 7.
16. Sherry Chayat. *Life Lessons: The Art of Jerome Witkin*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 132.
17. Edward Hopper, Llyod Goodrich. (New York: Whitney Musuem of American Art, 1964), 32.
18. "google definition of mind's eye".  
<https://www.google.ca/#q=definition+of+mind%27s+eye>

### **Bibliography**

Betterton, Rosemary. *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists, and the Body*.

London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Betterton, Rosemary, Ed. *Unframed: Practices and Politics of Women's*

*Contemporary Painting*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus, 2004.

*Drawn to Paint: The Artwork of Jerome Witkin*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Galleries, 2011.

Chayat, Serry. *Life Lessons: The Art of Jerome Witkin*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994.

Hales, Peter Bacon. *Silber Cities: Photographing American Urbanization, 1839-1939*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

Hooper, Edward. Goodrich, Llyod. *Edward Hopper*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1964.

Lippard, Lucy. Tals-Gonzales, Olivia. *Defining Eye: Women, Photographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1997.

Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New York: New York Press. 1997.

Meyerowitz, Joel. Westerbeck, Colin. *Bystander: A History of Street Photography*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1994.

Respini, Eva. *Cindy Sherman*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012.



Schama, Simon. *Jenny Saville*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications.  
2005.

Schor, Mira. *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture*. Durham and  
London: Duke University Press, 1997.